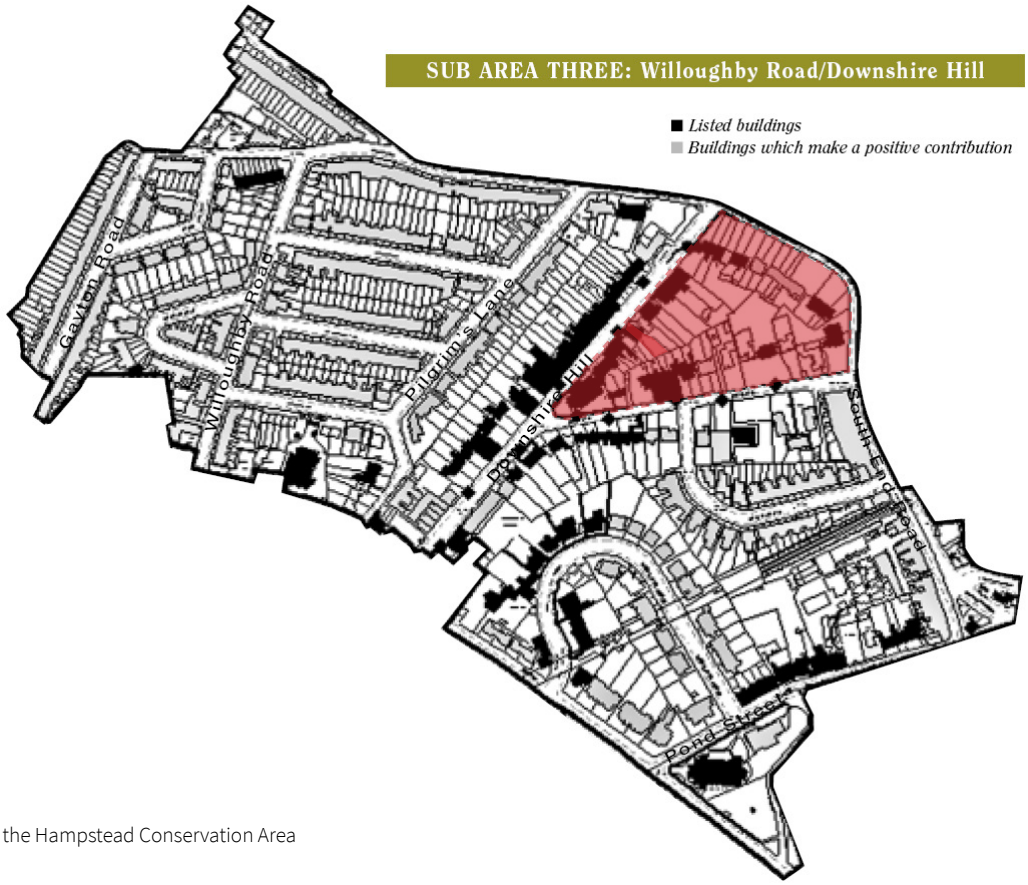
6. Heritage Statement

39 Downshire Hill, London NW3 1NU

James Lambert Architects Ltd
www.jameslambert.london
T: +44(0)20 7608 0833

6 Heritage Statement

The applicant property is a residential Grade 2 Listed Building set within the Hampstead Conservation Area (CA). The Hampstead Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the diversity of its areas and the contrast between dense and open spaces as one of its major characteristics. Such is its diversity that the CA is divided further into sub-areas, of which the applicant property is within Sub-Area 3: Willoughby Road/ Downshire Hill.



Sub Area Three of the Hampstead Conservation Area

Aerial view of red area highlighted in top image

Within Sub-Area Three, there is a triangular island of buildings bordered by the roads of Keats Grove, Downshire Hill and South End Road, shown on the previous page. At the apex of this triangle is the Grade 1 Listed St. Johns Chapel. The CA appraisal describes this island in the following:

> *'Keats Grove, Downshire Hill and the stretch of South End Road that links them were developed in the early 1800s around the elegant chapel of St John's. Most of the houses date from that period, and are listed. They range from tiny cottages to quite substantial villas of brick or stucco, detached or combined in informal terraces in a variety of classical styles or the Gothic of Nos.7 & 8 Downshire Hill.*
> *All are set in spacious front gardens defined by low walls, hedges or railings. These gardens, the numerous mature trees together with quality and variety of the houses give the area a strong identity.'*

The applicant property is one of many Listed Buildings in this area as shown in this diagram from the LA's website:

The original applicant house and its adjoining neighbour was built in the early nineteenth century and listed in 1974. The listing description is as follows:

> *List Entry Number: 1067413*
> *Pair of semi-detached houses. Early C19. Stucco. Hipped slated roof with stucco eaves cornice and central chimney-stack. 3 storeys and basements. 1 window each. No.39 with C20 side entrance extension; No.40, cambered arch doorway with overlight and panelled door. Recessed sashes; ground floor with louvred shutters and sill band, 1st floor with cast-iron balconies. INTERIORS: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached low brick garden walls with cast-iron railings having urn finials.*

The applicant house was extended to the rear and infilled to the side, attaching it to No.38a. Properties along Downshire Hill vary in style greatly even if there are some common features but the CA appraisal highlights that the non-uniformity of the buildings is part of its delight and character. This variety makes up part of the area's village-like quality and its diversity makes the experience of the area engaging and non-linear and gives it its 'Genius Loci'.

Aerial view along Downshire Hill showing the front elevations of the host property terrace

Aerial view along Downshire Hill showing existing extension along the host property terrace

A huge diversity can also be seen when looking at existing rear extensions. The case officer's pre-application report highlights the existing conservatory's unusual form:

'The conservatory's design is unusual in terms of both its form and materials. According to the approved plans the architect was James B Benson but there seems to be little information about any other of his projects. If you decide to proceed with an application for the works you will need to include an assessment of the significance of the conservatory in your heritage statement.

It was clear that the conservatory is in an extremely poor condition and either needs extensive repairs or replacement. As it post-dates the listing, bears very little relationship the building and does not appear to be the work of an architect of note it does not contribute to the special interest of the building and therefore there would not be an objection to its demolition and replacement.

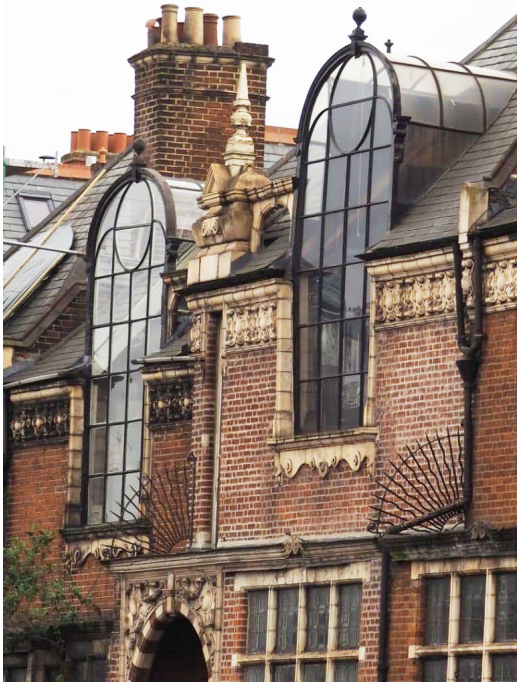
The replacement conservatory's scale and form proposed would only be acceptable on the grounds it was replacing a similar structure.'

Further research has not revealed any additional information regarding the architect James B Benson, and it is therefore concluded that they cannot be considered of particular note, and the conservatory is therefore without special historic or artistic significance.

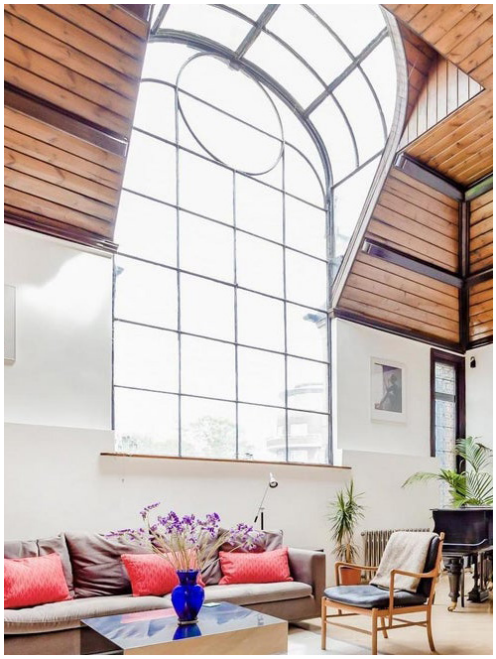
As a result, and in combination with the unusual form, flawed material design and poor condition, the conservatory can best be said to contribute neutrally to the character of the Listed Building or the Conservation Area as a whole. However, in the context of CA's overall character, the unusual form can be understood as forming part of the diversity of the area and it can be said that it could contribute positively were it in better condition. Reinforcing this view, the Conservation Area Design Guide states that 'The diversity of architectural style and consistently high quality in design is what makes Hampstead special'.

The existing structure is clearly not of sufficient high quality, but the drawings presented in this application show that the conservatory can be reimagined as a high-quality structure when thoughtfully and properly detailed by an Architect with a proven record of working with heritage assets in London and with glazed structures.

There are also many examples of curved, glazed structures of the Victorian era, conservatories, orangeries, but also artists' studios, some of which are illustrated below. It is possible to interpret the the original design of the conservatory as a reference to this design tradition. Against the background of such structures, its form can be seen as an appropriate complement to the host building.



St John's Studios, Talgarth Road, 1891



St John's Studios Interior, Talgarth Road

Ballyfin Conservatory by Richard Turner, 1855 (prior to restoration)

Victorian conservatory

Horniman Museum, 1890

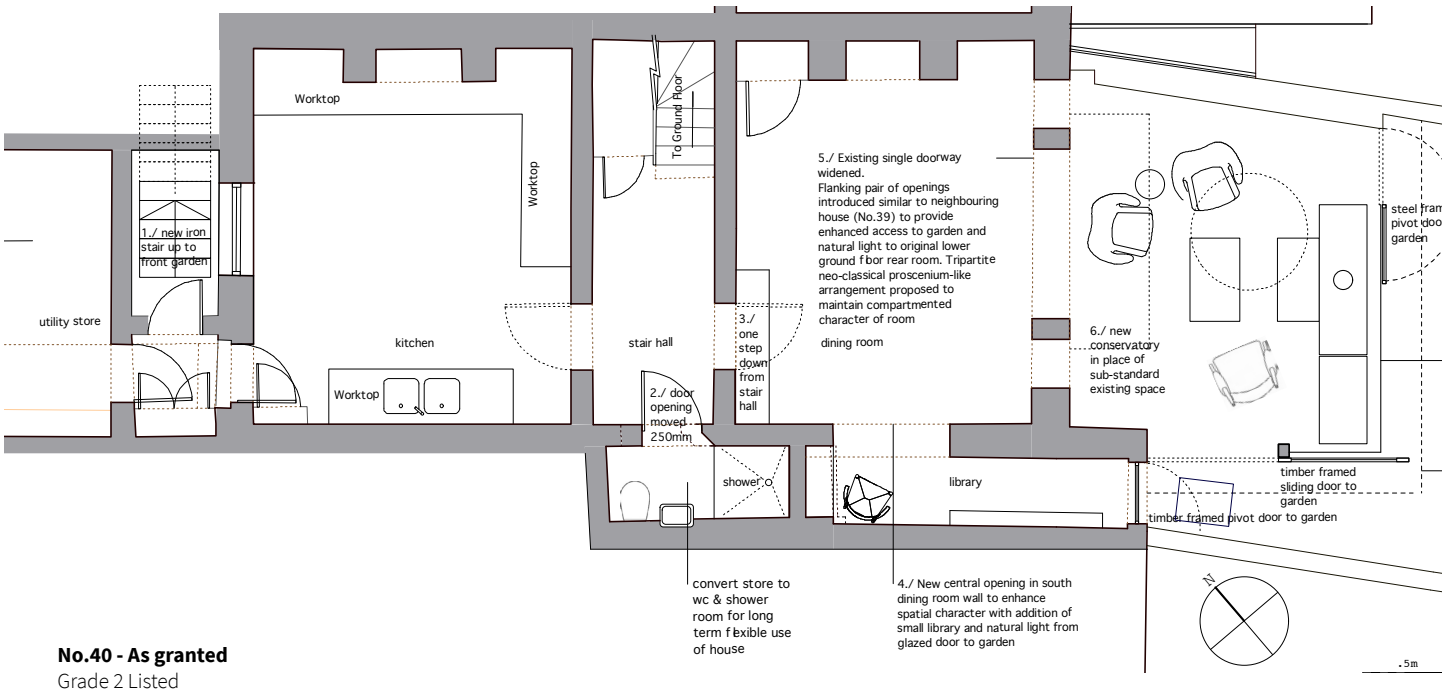
By improving the detailed design and quality of the conservatory, and repairing the house's connection to the garden, the proposals will make a positive contribution to both the Listed Building and to the Conservation Area as a whole.

The pre-application report recognises that a replacement conservatory would be acceptable on a broadly like for like basis with similar characteristics to the existing structure.

With regard to the removal of historic fabric, the impact of the proposals on the original fabric is modest, and restricted to the lower ground floor where period decorative details would originally have been sparse, and considerable modernisation works have already been done under previous consents. Several precedents exist where similar proposals have been granted permission for nearby properties, most relevantly the neighbouring house, No.40. The elements being removed, and corresponding precedents, are listed below:

- Non-original windows in the lower ground floor original rear wall removed, and the openings lowered to floor level. Precedent: *No.40 2020/2813/P, existing door opening widened and new floor to ceiling openings made.*
- New door opening created in original side wall at lower ground floor level for access to store area.
  Precedent: *No.40 2020/2813/P, new floor to ceiling opening made in original side wall at lower ground floor for access to library space.*
- Lowering of the floor level in the rear half of the lower ground floor.
  Precedent: *No.40 2020/2813/P, lowering of the floor level in the rear half of the lower ground floor.*

No.40 - Original
Grade 2 Listed
Original fabric removed from rear and side walls and floor lowered in rear half



No.40 - As granted
Grade 2 Listed
Rear Extension and demolition granted under 2020/2813/P

7.1 Camden Local Plan

Amenity

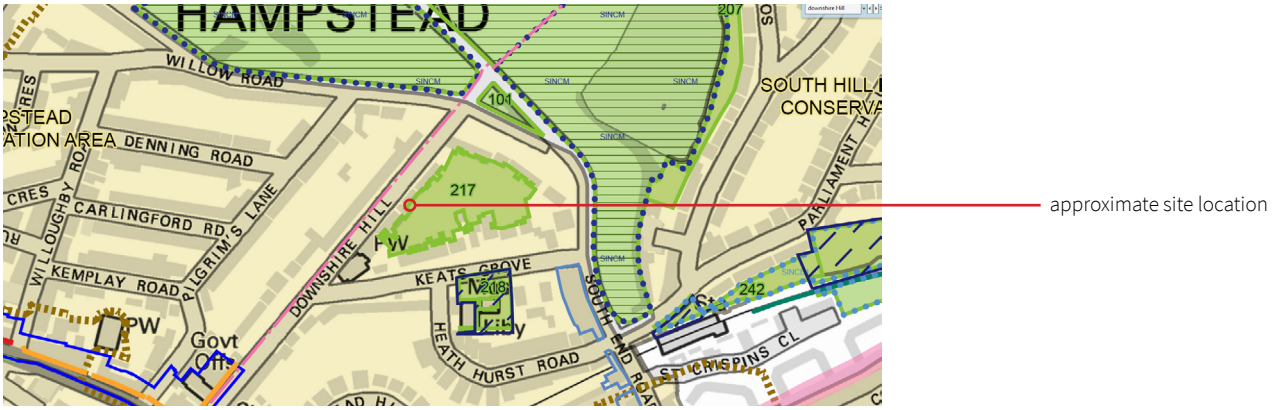
Policy A1 Managing the impact of development

The proposal will not worsen the existing condition with regard to impact on neighbours' amenities. The proposed conservatory is no larger overall and measurably lower than the existing. It is deeper in plan in the central bay with the flat roof but only by less than 1m and this section is single-storey. The new flat roof to the side infill at upper ground level is no wider or longer than the existing curved roof it replaces. Where it is infilled to become flat, it abuts an existing flank wall and so does not impact on the neighbour.

Policy A2 Open space

The Hampstead CA states that 'a triangular area made up of some gardens at the rear of Keats Grove and Downshire Hill is designated as Private Open Space', shown as No.217 Keats & Downshire Gardens on the Policies Map shown below.
The proposal does not exceed the existing footprint and therefore does not impinge on the collective designated Private Open Space of the gardens.

Design and Heritage



Policy D1 Design

a. The character and context of the Hampstead CA is presented in the Heritage Statement above, where it is argued that the proposed design replicates the existing structure and reproduces its role in the diversity of architectural styles which make up the village-like character of the area. In addition the Heritage Statement assesses how the existing structure can be read in the wider context of the Victorian era and recalls the fine metal structures of Victorian conservatories orangeries and studios, and therefore has a degree of familiarity and appropriateness which the replacement will preserve.
b. The existing structure is in a poor condition and uninhabitable, as documented elsewhere in this document. It therefore impacts negatively on the host property. Reconstructing the conservatory will allow high quality materials to be used to create a robust and high quality structure incorporating bespoke detailing which will repair this negative impact.
c. The existing structure has no thermal properties and has deteriorated beyond repair. The proposal will use materials that meet current Building Regulations and thus improve the thermal efficiency of the house as a whole. This in turn will improve the sustainability of the house.
d. The existing timber and perspex structure is not fit for purpose and now has to be replaced. The proposed replacement is designed to utilise durable and long lasting materials.

e. The redeeming quality of the existing structure is that it allows the original brick rear facade of the house to be appreciated. In the design of the proposed replacement conservatory, the Architect has harnessed considerable knowledge of working with glass structures and has also consulted with specialist glazing fabricators at an early stage to anticipate and resolve detailing issues. This will avoid the common shortcoming of projects where the planning stage design is at risk of becoming diluted when developed for construction owing to the practical limitations of structure and an incomplete understanding of what is actually achievable. Preserving the appreciation of the brick rear facade has been identified as a primary aim and the applicant wishes to ensure that the planning stage proposals can be realised at the construction stage with a suitable delicacy of structure and transparency of the envelope.
f. It is important to note that the conservatory cannot be seen by the public, and is only partially visible from the rear of any neighbouring properties.
g. The proposal does not worsen the existing condition in relation to access for all. It improves access for the able bodied and ambulant disabled user by providing a wider and more direct access from the street entrance to the rear garden. The wider staircase will also allow a stairlift to be retrofitted at a future date without harm to original building fabric, which would not be possible with the existing spiral stair.
h. By making the conservatory a usable and integrated part of the home, the household will enjoy a well lit and ventilated space with natural light and views to the outside. Today more than ever this is recognised as having significant benefits to the mental health of its users, as well as helping to reduce dependence on artificial lighting and space heating.
i. A new metallic structure will allow for the integration of multi-point locking systems which will be far more secure than the existing misshapen timber doors.
j. The replacement conservatory will follow the form of the existing and will not encroach upon the leafy garden.

Policy D2 Heritage
The proposal's heritage merits and impacts are presented in the Heritage Statement.

Camden Planning Guidance: Design

1.9, 1.10
The applicant seeks in their proposal to reflect the high quality of design evident across the borough. To this end the applicant has chosen to work with an award-winning architectural team who has worked solely in the higher end, private residential sector for over thirty years, largely within London, and mainly on heritage buildings. This demonstrates the applicant's commitment to prioritising high quality, bespoke design over economies of ease and repetition.

More general topics of design excellence, and effects upon Conservations Areas and Listed Building have been addressed elsewhere in this Statement.

Camden Planning Guidance: Home Improvements

Home
As presented earlier in this document the current conservatory is uninhabitable and the photos show that it is mainly used for storage. This has resulted in the conservatory becoming a barrier to the garden in terms of both visual amenity and enjoyment of a space which forms part of a significant wider private outdoor space which has been identified as such in the Hampstead CA. As it stands the conservatory is a missed opportunity to utilise a space with the best potential for natural light and ventilation. The proposal will revitalise the space and integrate it as part of a functioning home, providing a well-lit, spacious gathering space, directly connected to both kitchen and garden. This will foster a true sense of home as well as provide a space for flexible use with an enjoyable outlook to a mature garden. The proposals do not encroach beyond any existing hardstanding and the existing leafy green ambience of the back gardens will be sustained.

Sustainability

The rear of the house faces southeast and so has the potential to receive direct sunlight. Together with the massive masonry bulk of the original house, this provides the perfect opportunity to utilise solar gain to store heat throughout the day - even during winter - which can be released slowly through the night. The presence of tall trees and dense foliage will temper excessive solar gain on the hottest days, and the use of solar reflective glass will achieve the right balance between welcome solar gain and overheating. This passive heating will work in conjunction with underfloor heating which is best utilised in open-plan spaces of this type. The lowering of the floor in the rear half of the house will allow us to install this system in the original part of the house as well as in the conservatory. Because underfloor heating works at a lower temperature over a wide area, it requires less energy to run. Together with low-E glazing and the passive solar gain, the house's overall energy usage will be significantly reduced.

The guidance states:

> *The quality of materials contributes to the overall efficiency and long term cost savings, particularly important for insulation and new windows/doors;*

This document has previously presented the poor condition of the existing conservatory and in particular the deterioration of the timber framing. The new proposal will use high quality powder coated metal framing with structural silicone to provide a long lasting structure requiring little to low-maintenance. To further improve this, the glass will be applied with a Ritec coating to avoid debris from adhering to the surface thus enabling a simple rinse to remove dirt. This is more efficient that products such as Pilkington's 'Self-cleaning' glass which is a misleading term (as it is not self-cleaning but only non-adhesive to dirt at certain angles) and can only be used in certain situations.

The new proposals are contained within an area of existing hard-standing and so there will be no reduction in natural ground drainage, wild life habitat or enjoyment of a natural outlook.

Neighbours

The key concern with rear extensions is the overshadowing and loss of outlook of neighbouring properties. The proposal is generally lower than the existing structure as shown in the annotated rear elevation diagram. The central bay with remodelled flat roof is deeper in plan than the existing by 97cm, but is still single storey and remains within the overall parameters of the original volumetric envelope. It sits between two taller bays with curved roofs, and so can have no affect neighbours.
The flat roof at upper ground floor level extends to the same length as the existing curved roof. A flat roof is proposed for simplicity of junctions and improved weathering. This adjoins the existing flank wall of No.38a and so does not overshadow the neighbour or affect views. The site is well shielded on all sides by dense foliage and so the view of the rear of the house form properties on Keats Grove which back on the it are obscured.

Community

The applicant property is Grade 2 Listed and within the Hampstead Conservation Area. The Heritage Statement explains how the proposal responds to its context. In brief, although the pre-app comments highlighted the unusual form of the existing extension, when seen against the context of the variety of houses and extensions in the near vicinity and wider Conservation Area, this can be seen to fit in and contribute to the unique village feel of Hampstead. The replacement of the conservatory with a structure that carries forward the key elements of its distinctive form will preserve this contribution.

1. Materials

The existing timber frame is a dark brown tone and has deteriorated beyond repair. Powder coated metal framing is proposed which will be far more durable and as presented in the pre-app, will be of a bronze tone, which is a muted shade to complement the brickwork. This will present a more subdued colour, in relation to the existing dark brown shade, and will tone equally sympathetically with the original brown brick of the rear elevation. The durability of the metal frame over timber will greatly improve the lifetime of the structure with little to no maintenance beyond cleaning.

2.1 Ground extensions, 2.1.1 Rear extensions

The pre-app report commented that a replacement structure would be acceptable, but that to compensate for potentially less delicate framing when rebuilt with double-glazing, the height should be reduced. We have proposed a reduction in height but have also gone to extra lengths to design a bespoke minimal frame. The applicant has chosen to work with an architectural team with over thirty years of experience working with Listed buildings in London and with structural glazing. Specialist glazing fabricators have been consulted at this early stage to ensure that the minimal details illustrated in the application proposals can be achieved.

5. Gardens

The rear garden is large and mature and is a key element of the property. The garden will form the backdrop against which the activities within the proposed conservatory and adjoining spaces will take place. As described previously, the compromised configuration of the existing conservatory means that it has come to act as a barrier to interaction with the garden in a meaningful way. The new conservatory will rectify and reverse this, and will provide a space where the family can gather and enjoy views of the garden as well as direct access to it.

Camden Planning Guidance: Amenity

Aspects with regard to overlooking, privacy, daylight and outlook have been addressed elsewhere in this document

Development Policies

DP2 – Making full use of Camden's capacity for housing

Paragraph d) states that the council will resist any loss of residential floor space. The proposals will result in a slight increase in floorspace without any effect on the neighbours, and bring a significant improvement to the functionality of the home and the quality of life within it. This has been explored elsewhere in the document.

DP22 – Promoting sustainable design and construction

The benefits of using controlled solar gain in conjunction with thermal mass are well established, and are a distinctive element of the strategy of the new conservatory. In addition the proposed lowering of the floor in the rear half of the lower ground floor and in the conservatory will facilitate the installation of thermally efficient underfloor-heating, of which the energy conserving and amenity advantages are also well proven.

DP23 - Water

The proposed works are restricted to an existing built area. A slight increase in the roof area of the conservatory is proposed. The existing garden area is undisturbed, so that the natural surface drainage of the garden area is unaffected. In addition, water butts to facilitate rainwater collection and storage for use in gardening can be used to collect the water from the conservatory roof.

DP24 – Securing high quality design

Aspects of the design relating to its context, character, amenity and accessibility have been explored elsewhere in this document.

Paragraph 24.6 states:

> *Innovative design can greatly enhance the built environment and, unless a scheme is within an area of homogenous architectural style that is important to retain, high quality contemporary design will be welcomed*

The Conservation Area Appraisal states that the variety in Hampstead is part of its character and the aerial photographs presented in this document show that there is no overriding style in rear extensions. The proposals will be a subtle remake where the minute attention to the detail of a multitude of parts and junctions, will culminate in the overall enhanced quality of the new structure. The overall form will be recognisable as a reimagining of the existing conservatory, in which the effect of delicately profiled but robust contemporary detailing will lift it into the modern era, while remaining subservient to the period house to which it is attached.

Paragraph 24.6 states:

The retention and adaptation of existing buildings will be encouraged.

The refurbishment of the existing extension is not possible due to the state of the timber framing and the unsuitability of the perspex cladding. Therefore demolition and rebuilding of the conservatory is the only viable solution. To make the space integrate better with the house, some changes have been introduced to improve access, space and spatial flow and these changes are in line with others that have been allowed in adjacent properties. In this sense the retention of the existing historic building is at the heart of the scheme. The proposed adaptations to it are subtle and proportionate, and will ensure that it endures for generations to come.

Paragraphs 24.15 -24.16 state:

...detailing should be carefully considered so that it conveys quality of design and creates an attractive and interesting building. ... Schemes should incorporate materials of an appropriately high quality. The durability and visual attractiveness of materials will be carefully considered along with their texture, colour and compatibility with existing materials. Alterations and extensions should be carried out in materials... that complement or enhance a building or area.

These themes are explored in preceding sections. The quality of detailing and the subtle reimagining of the existing conservatory structure as a sympathetic complement to the original house is a recurring theme of the design narrative.

DP25 – Conserving Camden's heritage

Relevant points are addressed in the Heritage Statement.

DP26

This is covered under "Amenity" in the main D&A Statement, and under "Camden Planning Guidance: Home Improvements - Neighbours".